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MEMORIAL
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OF
THE MISSISSIPPI CONVENTION,
PRAYING
AN EXTENSION
OF
THE LIMITS OF THAT STATE.

DECEMBER 17, 1817.

Read, and referred to Mr. Poindexter, Mr. Speed, Mr. Robertson, of Louisiana, Mr. Claiborne, and Mr. Cobb.

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MEMORIAL.

*To the Honourable the Senate and House of Representatives, of the
United States of America, in Congress assembled.*

The Memorial of the Convention, convened at the town of Washington to form a constitution and state government for the people in the western part of the Mississippi territory, respectfully represents to your honourable bodies,

That having completed the constitution which they were chosen to form, for the government of the people authorized by the Congress of the United States, at their last session, to establish for themselves a separate and independent state, your memorialists deem it a duty incumbent on them, to attract the attention of your honourable bodies to a subject of great importance to the best interests of this portion of the union, and particularly to those whom they immediately represent.

By the first section of the act under which your memorialists are assembled, the boundary between this state and the Territory of Alabama, is designated to run from the junction of Bear creek with the Tennessee river, in a direct line to the north west corner of Washington county, and thence due south to the Gulf of Mexico, so as to intersect the confluence of the river Pascagoula. Against this unequal and artificial boundary your memorialists beg leave, most respectfully, to remonstrate.

Your memorialists deem it unnecessary to animadvert upon the circumstances under which the measure, of which they complain, was adopted; it will be sufficiently obvious on a view of the map, connected with a knowledge of a few leading facts, in relation to this subject, that injustice has been done to this section of the country; and they cannot for a moment doubt the readiness with which your honourable bodies will correct any error into which your predecessors may have fallen, without regard to the causes which led to it. Your memorialists are encouraged in this expectation, by a reference to the example of Louisiana, and the favourable result of a similar application made to Congress by the convention who formed the constitution of that state.

Your memorialists are aware of the difficulty which has from time to time been experienced by the national legislature in prescribing suitable geographical limits for the new states, which are growing up in the vast and extensive territories of the United States—to avoid the inaccuracies incident to legislation without proper information, it has been usual on such occasions to consult the feelings and wishes of the local authorities, who are enabled by actual observation, to cor-

rect the speculative opinions of those who are compelled to act without these advantages. This reasonable course your memorialists well hoped would have been pursued in relation to the Territory of which they are a part, by which means they would have received that justice which they now seek to obtain from your honourable bodies.

It is worthy of remark that no petition or memorial from the territorial legislature, nor from the people, so far as your memorialists are informed, was ever forwarded to the general government, praying the establishment of the line by which the territory has been divided. So soon as the formation of two states, by a north and south line through the centre of the Mississippi Territory was distinctly understood to have entered into the views of Congress, the attention of every one was directed to the natural boundary, as the most convenient and equitable partition between the eastern and western divisions of the Territory.

No suggestion to the contrary was ever sanctioned by the people or their representatives. In favour of such a divisional line, the opinions of both branches of the national legislature have been expressed. As early as the year 1810 the Senate of the United States postponed the bill for the entire admission of this territory into the union as a state, for the purpose of obtaining the assent of the state of Georgia to the formation of one or more states in said territory; that assent having been obtained, the House of Representatives, after mature deliberation passed a bill, providing for the ultimate establishment of the natural boundary, commencing at the bay of Mobile, and running north to the southern boundary of the state of Tennessee. The same plan of division, was strongly enforced by the Senate, during the session of 1816; and with a full knowledge of all these facts, the local legislature, not only acquiesced in the policy recommended, but in one or more instances, a considerable proportion of that body, have given it their approbation by express representations of the general government.

The only point on which a diversity of sentiment existed, was, whether one or two states should be formed of the territory, and not as to the line proposed, in case the division should take place. In the absence then of any petition, memorial, or remonstrance having for its object the establishment of an artificial, instead of a resort to the natural boundary, combined with the antecedent indications given of the sense in which this subject was viewed by both Houses of Congress, it was not without a mixture of mortification and surprise, that your memorialists received the intelligence, that a new and unexplored line of division had been adopted; inconsistent with a proper regard to equality, and incompatible with sound policy and the future welfare of this country.

In support of these premises your memorialists beg leave to enumerate some of the evils which will result to this state by the establishment of the artificial line, to which they have referred.

It gives to the Territory of Alabama, an advantage of three millions two hundred thousand acres of land more than is contained within the limits of the State of Mississippi. It deprives the new state of a considerable population; which, on a fair division of the territory, would have fallen within its jurisdiction. It even divides some of the eastern counties, so as to leave a part of the inhabitants on the Pascagoula unconnected with any county, and destitute of the security and benefits of either a territorial or state government.— It destroys the equality, in the partition among the south western States, of the sea-coast acquired by the purchase of Louisiana; thereby giving to the Territory of Alabama in the left, and to the State of Louisiana on the right, the whole extent of that sea coast, except a very small and unimportant portion between the Bay of Pascagoula and the mouth of Pearl River. It destroys the form and beauty of this state, by changing the limits which nature had prescribed to it. It moreover leaves this state destitute of a sea-port, whilst its two powerful neighbors, Alabama and Louisiana, will possess almost the entire sea-board from the eastern to the western boundary of Louisiana, as acquired by the treaty of the 30th of April, 1803, with the French emperor. Your memorialists forbear to go further into detail on this subject. Important as the foregoing considerations are, *they* would not ask of your honorable bodies an extension of their boundary, if by that act injustice would be done to the Territory of Alabama: no injury ought to be complained of by either party in consequence of a fair and equitable division of the actual territory, so as to give to each a just proportion. And it is worthy of remark, that by the fortune of the late war with the Creek Indians, and the events which have followed, the Indian title to a large portion of the lands in that part of the late Mississippi Territory is extinguished, and in a very short time, these lands will be exposed to sale by the United States. Emigration will be attracted to that district, which will in a few years give them a population more than double that of this state, within our limits as prescribed by the late act of Congress.— The quantity of land to which the Indian title is extinguished is very small and it is to be feared that many years will elapse before the tribes of Choctaws and Chickasaws, who now occupy the country to its northern extremity, can be induced to dispose of it to the government. This circumstance alone will confine the growth and population of the state, until it shall be overcome by some exercise of executive authority which will lead to the extinguishment of the Indian over this tract of country.

Your memorialists beg the attention of your honorable bodies to a view of the future prospects of the eastern part of this territory as connected with its present condition. In the event of our acquiring from Spain the remainder of the Floridas, which is confidently expected at no distant day, the obvious policy of the government will be to extend the eastern line of the Alabama Territory, along the course of the Chatahouche, to the Bay of Apalachicola—this extension will

be the most suitable and convenient disposition which the general government could make of the country lying between the Perdido and the Chatahouche; and the advantages which that territory would derive from the measure are of the highest interest.

The command of the seaboard, from the bay of Apalachicola, to the bay of Pascagoula, a distance of more than two hundred miles, including, besides many other ports of minor importance, the city of Pensacola, and the commercial depots at and near the bay of Mobile.

Your memorialists have referred to this contingency, as one which ought to have its due influence in the permanent regulations which are to be made at this time, because it may hereafter give an undue preponderance to that section of the territory over the western division.

Many other considerations might be urged to show the propriety and reasonableness of granting the prayer of your memorialists, but they leave them to the inferences of which the subject is susceptible, and to the wisdom and reflection of your honorable bodies.

Nature has separated this state, on the west, from the state of Louisiana, by the great river Mississippi. Why should it not be bounded, on the east, by the Mobile and the Tombigbee? Why should the order of nature be destroyed, and artificial boundaries *preferred*, less convenient, and productive of manifest injustice, both as to territorial limits, and a just distribution of the seacoast, which ought not to be monopolized by one state, to the exclusion of another, having equal claims, on the score of proximity to the ocean.

The arrangement contemplated by your memorialists, corresponds with the natural partition of the country. Georgia will be divided from the Alabama territory, by the river Chatahouche, and the Mobile affords to it a western boundary of equal dignity and convenience.

Your memorialists, in proceeding to form, for their constituents, a constitution, and assuming the rank of an independent state of the Union, were actuated by a full conviction, that your honorable bodies would consider their claim to an enlargement of boundary without prejudice, having the same constitutional power over the subject which existed at any former period.

Relying, therefore, that the same enlarged, liberal policy will be pursued, which has so uniformly characterised the proceedings of the national legislature, in relation to its territories, your memorialists advance, with becoming satisfaction, to the station assigned to them, as a member of the great American family; and with submission to the wisdom, moderation, and impartiality, of a tribunal so enlightened, your memorialists pray that the eastern boundary of this state may be extended to the bay of Mobile, and thence along the middle of the Tombigbee river, according to the meanders thereof, to the Cotton Gin Port, and thence due north, to the southern boundary line of the state of Tennessee.

And your memorialists, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

David Holmes, president of the convention, and
delegate from the county of Adams.

Josiah Simpson,
E. Turner,
Joseph Sessions,
J. Taylor,
John Steele,
Christopher Rankin,
James Wilkins.

From Jefferson county.

Cowles Mead,
J. E. Davis,
H. I. Balch.

From the county of Claiborne.

Walter Leake,
Thomas Barnes,
Daniel Burnet,
J. G. Clarke.

From Warren county.

H. D. Davis,
A. Glass.

From Franklin county.

James Knox.

From Wilkinson county.

George Poindexter,
Daniel Williams,
A. M. Scott,
John Joor,
G. C. Brandon,
Joseph Johnson.

From the county of Amite.

John Burton,
Thomas Batchelor,
Henry Hanna,
Angus Wilkinson,
Thomas Torrance.

*Form Pike county.*

W. J. Minton,
James Y. M'Noble,
David Dickson.

From Laurence county.

Harmon Runnels,
George W. King.

From Marion county.

Dougal M'Laughlin,
John Ford.

From Hancock county.

Nöil Jourdan,
A. Burnet.

From Jackson county.

John M'Leod,
Thomas Bilbo.

From Wayne county.

James Patton,
Clinch Gray.

From Green county.

L. M'Kay,
John M'Kae.



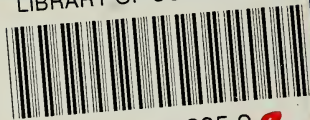


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